



U.S. Department of Justice

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FORMER BOOKKEEPER PLEADS GUILTY TO DEFRAUDING CHAIN HOTEL IN ROCKFORD OUT OF AT LEAST \$350,000

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and THOMAS J. KNEIR, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, today made the following announcement:

JANICE M. BIRKENESS, 44 (DOB: 12/29/59), 1670 Glen Elms Drive, Belvidere, Illinois, formerly employed as the bookkeeper at a Rockford chain hotel, pleaded guilty today in federal court to the crime of mail fraud arising from her theft of at least \$350,000 in cash receipts from the hotel from January 1998 through December 2002.

In pleading guilty, Birkeness acknowledged that she was employed as the bookkeeper of a chain hotel in Rockford, Illinois (“the Hotel”). As the bookkeeper, Birkeness was responsible for making daily bank deposits of the cash and checks received by the Hotel and for recording these deposits on a “Daily Sales and Cash Report.”

Birkeness admitted that from January 1998 through December 2002, she stole cash from the Hotel’s cash receipts and used that cash for personal purchases for herself and her family. Birkeness admitted that she concealed her theft by falsely recording on the “Daily Sales and Cash Report” that the Hotel had received less cash than it actually had received. Birkeness admitted that she would deliver the Report to the Hotel’s outside accountant on a monthly basis, knowing that the Report contained false information. Birkeness further admitted that she knew the outside accountant would use the false information to prepare a monthly operating statement that would falsely underreport the Hotel’s actual income by the total amount of her thefts of cash for that month.

Sentencing for Birkeness will be conducted on September 3, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. Birkeness faces a maximum sentence of up to twenty years of imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000 or the greater of twice the gross gain to Birkeness or twice the gross loss to the victim, in addition to a period of supervised release of at least two and up to three years following imprisonment. Her actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Keith C. Syfert.

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